

# Saxe Gotha Dispatch

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## Museum to Hold Annual Christmas Open House

The staff of the Lexington County Museum and the Friends of the Lexington County Museum invite you to come experience Christmas traditions of the past at the Museum as it hosts its Annual Christmas Open House on December 11th from 1 pm to 4 pm. Many of the thirty historic structures on the Museum complex will be open and will feature period Christmas decorations. The event is **free** to the public! Light refreshments that would have been eaten by Lexington residents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including hot apple cider and gingerbread, will be served. Friends of the Museum member Constance Caractor Flemming will be singing and playing live music in the John Fox House. A blacksmith will be



**Fox House Parlor Decorated in Period Fashion**

on site practicing his craft and educating visitors about smithing and a cooking demonstration will be taking place in our 19<sup>th</sup> century Ridgell kitchen as well.

The Christmas Open House is a great way to explore the museum's structures and collections on your own time, learn about the rich history of the county, and get into the Christmas spirit.

This event is family-friendly and fun. For more information, call the museum at 803-359-8369 or visit our webpage at [www.lex-co.sc.gov/museum](http://www.lex-co.sc.gov/museum). Come join us for this great event!

## Museum Past and Upcoming Outreach Efforts

Museum staff members continue to promote the museum through presentations and speaking engagements.

Staff members have given presentations to the Lexington, Gaston, Chapin and Swansea Libraries,

the Newberry Quilt Guild, and the Presbyterian Home.

Staff members will be giving presentations to St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, the Swansea Library, and the Hampton County Historical Society over the next few months.

If you'd like to have a museum staff member speak to your group, don't hesitate to give us a call. We can speak on a variety of topics related to Lexington County and its history.

## Halloween Events are a Huge Success

The Lexington County Museum held two events to celebrate Halloween. The first event was our annual two-day Haunted History Halloween program. This event featured a tour around the museum's grounds. Attendees stepped into 1850 Lexington and followed Manuel Seastrunk on his quest to find out what happened to his recently deceased friend George Leaphart. They met many of Lexington's citizens from 1850 along the way before ending up at the wake for George Leaphart. Visitors learned about 19<sup>th</sup> century medical remedies and the healing powers of "users." More than 300 adults and children toured the museum as part of the Haunted History Program.

The second event put on by the museum was the

"Murders and Mysteries" walking tour of downtown Lexington. This tour, which took place the evening of Saturday October 29<sup>th</sup> allowed attendees to learn about some of the strange and tragic events that happened on or near Lexington's Main Street in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Around 110 people came to hear museum guides speak about murders, lynchings, possible ghosts, and court trials that occurred in Lexington.

Museum staff members are planning another tour of Main Street so if you missed this tour, don't worry! Just keep an eye out!



## Friends Fundraiser Gala Date Moved



The Friends of the Lexington County Museum will be holding their annual fundraiser gala on the evening of Saturday March 25. Although the fundraiser has been held in late January for many years, the Friends felt that a date later in the spring was better due to the fact that the weather in January can have a negative impact on the

fundraiser and its attendance. Like the past several years, the fundraiser will be held at Lexington's Town Hall (111 Maiden Lane Lexington) and will begin at 6 pm. The Great Society Band will provide music and a silent auction will take place. Tickets will be \$60 this year and sponsorship

opportunities are available. Be on the lookout for more information as we get closer to the date.

## Photos from the Haunted History Program and the Murders and Mysteries Walking Tour



## Museum Visitation in September and October 2016

Visitation rose in September and October thanks to somewhat cooler temps and school groups returning.

In September, 1,404 visitors came to the museum, including visitors from twelve states other

than SC and two foreign countries. October's visitation was a bit higher as we saw 1,917 visitors, including tourists from sixteen states other than SC and the United Kingdom.

The number of school

groups increased as the school year got underway. Various public, private, and home school groups from Lexington, Richland, and Aiken Counties took part in our free educational programs.



## World War I Artifacts Donated to the Lexington County Museum

The museum was fortunate to recently receive an original World War I helmet, gas mask, bayonet, duffel bags, Victory Medal, and numerous letters and photos from Germany, all of which were owned by Tillman Meetze. These items were donated to us by Anne Meetze Addy, the daughter of Benjamin Tillman Meetze.

Benjamin Tillman Meetze, who went by Tillman, was born near Lexington on December 2nd, 1890, the son of John Quincy Adam Meetze (1851-1925) and Julia Ann Rachel Bone (1855-1942). He spent his youth in and around Lexington, and like many folks in Lexington County was working as a farmer.

On December 11th, 1917, he was enlisted in the United States Army at Lexington Courthouse, South Carolina. Training at Camp Jackson and later at a camp near Chattanooga, Tennessee quickly followed. On April 9th, 1918, he boarded a transport with other soldiers for France, arriving there after a voyage across the Atlantic, as he was assigned to Company M of the 6th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division, American Expeditionary Forces. His first experience in battle would come on August 17th and 18th, 1918, in the attack upon the town of Frapelle and Hill 451; this experience would soon be followed by the fighting in the Saint Miheil Offensive (September 12th), and in the Meuse-Argonne from September 26th to November 11th, 1918. The fighting of October 13th was described in the Division history as "the bitterest fighting the division had ever experienced." By the end of the offensive, the division had suffered 9,883 casualties.

Following the armistice of November 1918, Private Meetze was stationed with his regiment at Trier, Germany, where they were assigned to duty as part of the Army of Occupation. On July 22nd, 1919, Private Meetze boarded a transport and started his return voyage to the United States, arriving on the 25th. Reporting to Camp Gordon, Georgia, he was discharged from the service on July 30th, 1919, being 27 years old and listed as 5 ft. 5 in. tall, with blue eyes, brown hair and of a ruddy complexion.

Following his service he would remain in the Lexington area for the remainder of his life. He would live another sixty-nine years, during this time seeing each of his fellow Great War Veterans pass away. At the time of his death on November 7th, 1988, he was the last living World War I Veteran of Lexington County.

Thanks to this donation, and other World War I artifacts in our collection, museum staff members are putting together a small exhibit on World War I in time for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US entry into the war. Be on the lookout for more information about that exhibit!



## Museum Calendar of Events



- Dec. 11      Lexington County Museum Christmas Open House  
Christmas Open House  
1 pm to 4 pm  
Free to the Public  
Refreshments will be served  
Lexington County Museum Complex  
Many of the museum's historic structures will be decorated in period fashion. A cooking and blacksmithing demonstration will also take place.
- Dec. 12-21      Lexington County Museum Decorated for Christmas  
Miss the Christmas Open House? Don't worry! The museum will keep the decorations up until December 21<sup>st</sup>!

### 2017

- Jan. 28-29      Civil War Encampment and Candlelight Tour  
Encampment runs during museum open hours;  
Candlelight Tours begin on the hour between 6 pm and 9 pm  
Lexington County Museum Complex  
\$5 for adult/free for children under 12 for candlelight tour  
Encampment is free
- March 25      Friends of the Museum Annual Fundraiser  
Theme TBD  
6 pm to 10 pm  
Tickets are \$60 per person  
Sponsorships are available  
Lexington Municipal Complex  
111 Maiden Lane Lexington, SC  
The fundraiser date was changed from late January to late March in order to avoid cold wintry weather.

Call the museum at 803-359-8369 or email [museum@lex-co.com](mailto:museum@lex-co.com) to find out more about these events.

## Meet Stanley Rikard

Visitors to the museum in the last year have likely encountered one of our most committed volunteers, Stanley "Rooster" Rikard. Rooster is a devoted volunteer who has shown up for "work" nearly every other Friday and at almost every public event we have held. He was introduced to the Friends of the museum by Mandy Derrick, a personal friend, and joined the Friend's Board of Directors in May of 2015.

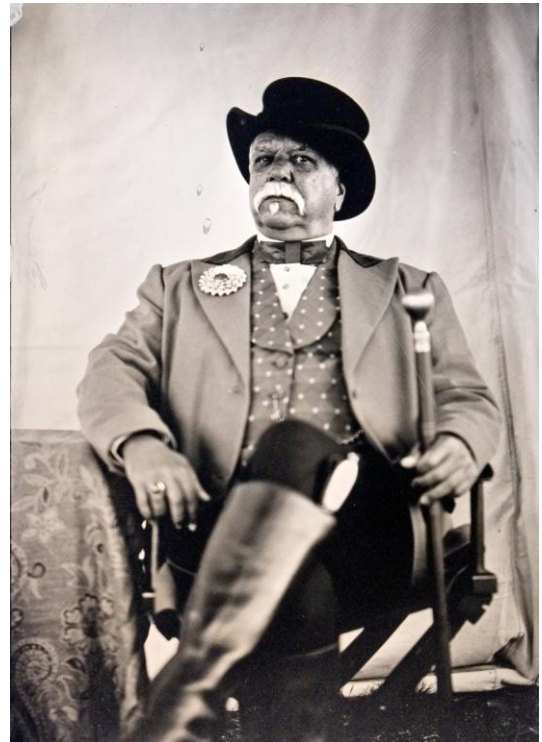
Stanley is from Lexington. He grew up on Hope Ferry Rd and graduated from Lexington High in 1976. He went on to get a degree in Wildlife Biology from Clemson in 1981. His professional life is a tale of adventure, fitting for a guy whose favorite time period in American History is the Wild West. He worked in Savannah, GA for the US Army Corps of Engineers for eighteen years. While there in the mid 1980s he had the experience of assisting a dive team recover cannons, cannonballs and artifacts from the Confederate Ironclad CSS Georgia. Though he says he's always enjoyed history, he credits this event as giving him the desire to become more involved with historical work as a hobby. Stanley has spent the past twenty years as a biologist at Ft. Jackson managing forested lands for endangered species of native flora and fauna. He currently manages sixty nest boxes for American Kestrels, small

cavity-nesting hawks. He bands and tracks approximately 125 nestlings and adults annually.

When he's not tracking plants and animals on base, Stanley enjoys yard work and cooking, especially outdoor cooking, in large cast-iron pots and cauldrons over wood fires. He was taught cooking skills from his parents and men's groups from Zion Lutheran church. He also likes dressing in period attire appropriate for the Victorian age and has been told that he owns more wide-brimmed hats than should be allowed. It may not be too much of a surprise that he considers Halloween to be his favorite holiday of the year. He enjoys working with the museum for our annual Haunted History event. This year he played the part of a Funeral Director and helped transform the Leaphart-Harman House into a spooky mourning scene. He will also play a role in our upcoming Christmas Open House and will hopefully get a chance to do more cooking for our visitors.

When we interviewed Rooster for this article, he asked that we add the following quote:

*Fellow museum Friends and museum staff are some of the friendliest and most dedicated people I've had the pleasure to work with. It is a joy to*



**Stanley Rikard's tintype photo**

*assist them in the many tasks that are needed to implement all the museum programs and events.*

We definitely appreciate the kind words and all of the work he does for us. We are also excited about collaborating with him on future events!

## Lexington County Museum

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*Gateway to  
Yesterday*



**We're on the Web!**  
**[www.lex-co.sc.gov/museum](http://www.lex-co.sc.gov/museum)**

The Lexington County Museum was started in 1970 to collect, preserve and present the history of Lexington County. After initially having only one historic house, the museum expanded and now has thirty historic structures over seven acres in downtown Lexington. Through exhibits in historic houses, the museum interprets everyday life in the town of Lexington and throughout Lexington County from the eighteenth century to the start of the Civil War. The museum offers guided tours to visitors for a small fee and has thirteen different hands-on programs for school groups free of charge by appointment. These programs attract schools from around the state and educate students about the history of Lexington County and about the everyday life of Lexington County residents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Friends of the Lexington County Museum is a non-profit group founded in 1997 with an advisory board, officers, and a board of trustees representing all municipalities in Lexington County. Its mission is to enhance the Lexington County Museum through its duly appointed commission and to support, aid, and assist in the improvement and expansion of the Museum. The Friends group sponsors fund-raising projects to help further the Museum's valuable contribution to the county. The Friends group has raised over \$270,000 for the museum so far. To learn more about the Friends or to join, visit the museum's webpage ([www.lex-co.sc.gov/museum](http://www.lex-co.sc.gov/museum)).

## Highlighted Artifact from the Museum's Collections

The highlighted artifact for this issue is a circa 1810 tall case clock owned by the Leaphart family of Lexington District, SC. Because of the Masonic symbols located on the face, legend has it that it was used in the Masonic temple in Granby, SC. However, there is no truth to this as it was popular to adorn decorative items with Masonic symbols during that time period. This was fashionable until the rise of anti-secret society groups. The maker of this clock is unknown.

